

refuge in the water.

In the

enough. Where the ocean's lip meets the sand children chase waves.

They scream as the whitewater curdles around their

small toes

Of Belonging and Loss

There is magic in this In something place, the unnamed, a feeling of wonder that is slippery, like you could hold it up and it would catch the skin light like a fish. buildings is muraled with colour

There are 14 mosques in Rimal and they choose this one today, its blue dome inflated with calls of the Our'an, the air tightened, resonant with sound, pulled tight as if on the bow of a Rababeh.

They are renovating the hospital. Soon the new maternity ward will be finished, and more incubators, more space, better facilities will mark the first moments of a life, will be a world in which to open eyes for the first time, deep and searching.

They are doing yoga on a rooftop when a jet flies low overhead. They reach for each other in instinct, try to cover each other's bodies. Today it is nothing, but the air feels charged. A familiar current.

At anthedon, you could feel

the

summer, when the air is static with heat, fat drops of ice cream dry fast on the footpaths. The beach is swollen with bodies seeking

All the voices, the laughter, the music seem to blend in resonant frequency,

hum of joy.

not

fish are small close to the shore. It's

Their wet bodies ripple.

the deep hold

seized.

The

of the city to the shoreline,

iron

age artefacts

and Roman walls and adobe bricks,

the makings of Gaza, the gateway to the sea.

She packs their favourite food into small boxes for the day. They are too old for it now but she does it anyway. If she stands in the right place in the kitchen a sliver of ocean appears in the window. In the afternoons the sun makes a similar sliver on the floor. She reads and when the children return they regale her with their days, the sweat and energy of the boxing gym, the dramas of the schoolyard.

^Ebelonging. In parts it is layered, you can see

The park entrance is the void of a minaret in white stone.

Behind it, the legs of palms slender grow mark and the path, step by step.

In a plaza, under an awning, a group of women teach young children the art of tatreez. Parts of the cyprus trees are symbolised and embroidered. The women have tough fingers and careful hands, they can stitch without looking while they guide the children, the shade of buildings fall to meet them.

The Omari Mosque bends the light around until it is soft. Two young boys pray with their legs folded, their feet tucked under.

An older man looks out through the colonnade, resting against a pillar. Inside, the carpet is the colour of the ocean at dusk and threads of gold mark the direction of Mecca.

Columns plunge into the ground like they are bracing against the sky in its descent to a dark sea. long

The shadows are

sea.

the

into

lower

and

lower

crouches

sun

corner.

You can feel the smoothness of thousands of hands on the stone, you can feel their souls in the walls. There are thousands of meters of deep cut inscriptions, stories in the walls.

faint trace of the past. He turns the soil over and cups it in his palm. There is life in there. Last spring an Israeli plane flew over and sprayed the crops with herbicide. Everything died. This year the spinach turn their cheeks to the sun. He has piles of nylon ready for the next spray. He walks the rows and counts them, over and over.

There's а show on at Shababeek. There are paintings of people on the coastline, their shadows stretch and so does the water, catching the light. In another room colours pool to form scenes of life in Gaza. A boy crouches in the grass below an olive tree, two children make music in the space where two buildings meet. Voices move like water in the fluorescent light of the gallery and you can see friends greet each other, you can feel the togetherness of this space, opening it the makes.

but the warmth of the day lingers.

The power is out again so the store stays open in the shadows. She has a safety box of cash behind the till for sales, but most people have accounts set up. She notices that her father often crosses out debts but she doesn't see the money coming in. His prayer mat is rolled behind the counter. She runs a finger over the hem and hears him moving in the house above her. In his soft footsteps she feels a surge of love.

Her bedroom is shades of blushed cheeks in love. She chose everything, the sofa, the photos of family, the art. She is a beautician, and all her favourite products are arranged on the desk like a small city, you could walk your fingers through the streets. At dusk the room blushes hard, the mirror making sapphires of light on the rug. In only a few weeks she will open her own store, she will bring beauty to people, she will show them what she sees in them.

They look as though they are floating on rivulets of light. They know they cannot go too far, they know the risks. One man already had a boat seized. Off shore, men fish in sky blue boats.

> In front of the bank, let their men cigarettes stick to their lips while they laugh and count their change. From

> > When the

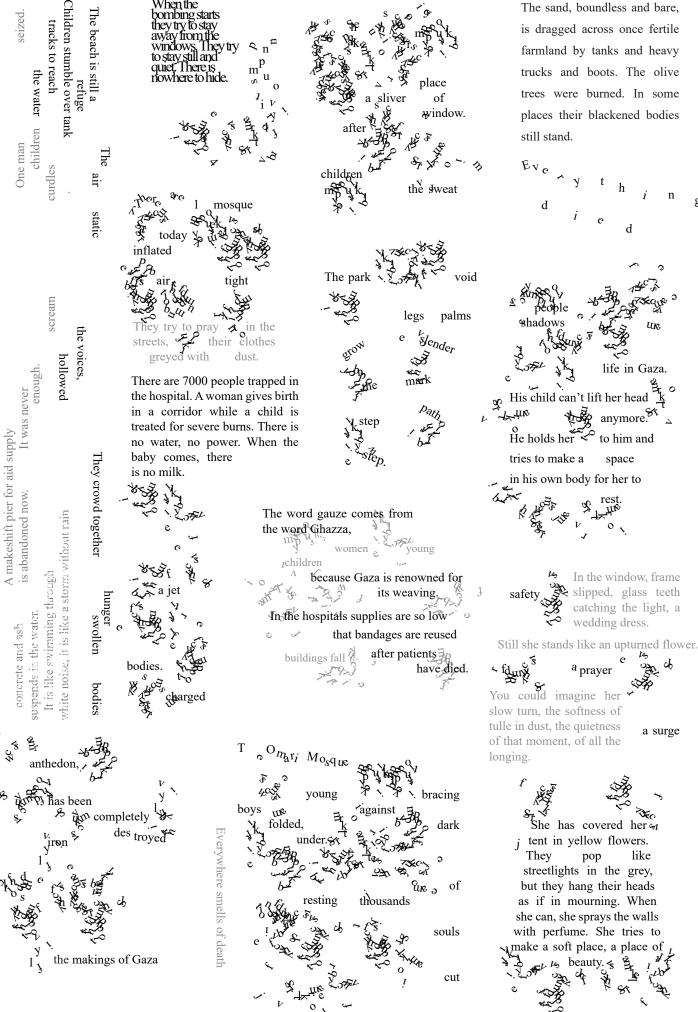
bombing starts they try to stay

In the Hammam al-Samara bathhouse, a chequered dome lets in sun but not rain. From the pool below, through the steam, it looks like an iris of light, to watch and to be watched by the sky. Everyone comes here. In the compression of the ancient brick vaults, the stifling heat, you can feel a release.

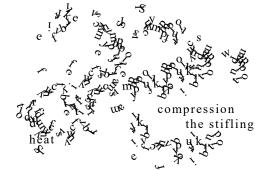
A large group of siblings eat barbecued lamb and chicken under trees and play fruit cards. Sometimes they pull at an orange and skin it over the table, its flesh dripping. Barbed wire curls like a tongue above them, silent but saying everything.

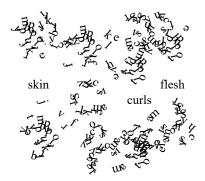
> The sand, boundless and bare, is dragged across once fertile farmland by tanks and heavy trucks and boots. The olive trees were burned. In some places their blackened bodies still stand.

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In front of the bank, men let their cigarettes stick to their lips while they an own is those change.





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